

Robinson-Aiken Service Building and Stable
48 Elizabeth Street
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-275

HABS
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177B-

PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. SC-275

ROBINSON-AIKEN SERVICE BUILDING AND STABLE

Address: 48 Elizabeth Street, Charleston, Charleston County,
South Carolina.

Present Owner: I'On Lowndes Rhett, 48 Elizabeth Street, Charleston,
South Carolina.

Brief Statement of Significance: A rare example of its type with notable architectural
character.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: John Robinson, original owner, bought the land in 1817. (Charleston County Mesne Conveyance Office, vol. V-8, p. 393 [longhand]). He sold the house in 1826 to William Aiken, Charles Edmonston and Lewis A. Pitray. (Ibid. vol. T-9, p. 238). Governor William Aiken lived here and the house went to his daughter, Mrs. A. Burnet Rhett. (Information from Mrs. I'On Lowndes Rhett).
- B. Date of Erection: Circa 1830.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement
1. Architectural character: This building forms part of a town-house group which remains virtually complete, and contains a notable arcaded stable.
 2. Condition of fabric: Structurally sound, with some interior woodwork deteriorated.
- B. Technical Description of Exterior

This two-story building, 19'-3" x 71'-9", adjoins the house at the northwest corner, separated from the art gallery by a narrow space. It has a gable roof covered with slate, with a tile ridge. On the west side, along Elizabeth Street, six blank panels with pointed heads are located at the second floor level. Walls are of brick, 14-1/2" thick, stuccoed on the exterior.

The east side, which faces the yard, has ten bays of windows on the upper story; each has a three-light transom, below

which the opening is closed with a board and batten shutter hung with heavy strap hinges on pintles. At the lower story are four openings, two wider ones near the ends and narrower ones near the center; their heads are four-centered (pointed) arches. These openings retain heavy pintles, but only one still is closed with a (louvered) door; one of the narrow openings has been widened in recent years by means of a steel lintel. The stucco on this elevation shows simulated stone-joint markings.

The north end has a wide central opening, with four-centered arch, on each story. The upper one is closed with a louvered and paneled door hung on two heavy strap hinges; the door of the lower one is of heavy planks hung on similar hinges.

A blocky stucco cornice is treated as a pediment on the ends of the building. The tympanum contains a small circular opening with a decorative cast-iron grille. Two, hooded chimneys rise above the west wall, in the south half of the building.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans; first floor--The north half is occupied by a stable of six stalls and the south end by a carriage room; between them is a small harness room and an enclosed stair leading to the second floor from the outside.
Second floor--The north half is occupied by a hay loft; it is reached by a small square winding stair in the north-east corner. At the south half are two rooms separated by a small stair hall; they appear to have been used for living purposes.
2. Flooring: Longleaf yellow pine boards varying from 9-1/2" to 12" in width, on the second floor. The first floor is largely earth, with brick paving behind stalls.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Ceilings are of painted plaster, on wood lath; some areas have come loose, revealing both split lath and rotary-sawn lath. Walls are plastered on the brick, except the hay loft; second-floor frame partitions are plastered.
4. Openings: Second-floor doors are board and batten, hung on wrought-iron strap hinges, pintles driven into casing. Trim is of painted wood, backband type. Windows are trimmed with narrow wood moldings.

5. Trim; second floor: The south room has an Adam-style mantel with reeded pilasters, with a block over each pilaster. The mantel shelf is a delicate cornice supported by an ovolo and dentils; the frieze is plain. Along the partition is a wooden hook strip with cast-iron hooks. There is a fireplace in the other room but its mantel has been removed.
6. Hardware: The door to the south room on the second floor has a box lock of wood and sheet metal; it appears original. The door to the other room has a wrought-iron box lock, bearing a coat of arms with the name "Carpenter and Co., Patentee." Window shutters are hung on wrought iron strap hinges.
7. Framing: Second-floor ceiling joists are 3" x 10", 16" on centers. The roof framing has no ridge-pole.
8. Miscellaneous: Near the door of the hay loft is a hoist; it consists of a vertical timber, which is free to rotate on a vertical axis, carrying a boom with a wooden pulley near its end (see detail, sheet No. 3 of HABS measured drawings).
9. Stable arcade: Along the longitudinal axis of the building is an arcade of six bays, supported on solid wooden Doric columns, two of which have fallen. The wooden arches are four-centered ("Tudor"); the arcade motif is repeated more simply along the west wall, framing the mangers, of which some portions remain. Partitions between stalls have been removed, but marks on the posts indicate that they were of 1-1/4" x 6-1/2" boards with rounded edges. (This arcade is detailed on sheet No. 3.)

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
June 1963

Addendum to:

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